Mr. Cubitt, in a postscript to the report alluded to, dwelt on this at some length, and was quoted by us at the time. He suggested for the consideration of government, the expediency of devoting 1,000*l.* or 1,500*l.* to this purpose, and proposed that premiums should be offered for the best and strongest rolled iron beams, calculated for the use of floors, to sustain a load not under twenty-five tons, with bearings not less than 24 feet apart. We would strongly urge this very important subject on the attention of men in power. We are far from desiring to be alarmists, but we only express what we have often felt (long before the fall of this bridge on the Chester Railway), when we say, that there are many structures wherein the cast-iron employed is the germ of a disaster, and that the stability of such during even several years is no assurance against the occurrence of an accident, instantaneous and terrible.

ROYAL INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS.

On Monday evening last, at an ordinary meeting of the Institute, Mr. Charles Fowler, V. P., in the chair, Mr. Clayton forwarded drawings of the remains of the round church in Ludlow Castle, and various other presents were announced. The Dean of Hereford, in presenting a copy of Mr. Phillips' appeal in favour of the restoration of Hereford Cathedral, made some observations on the works, and on the growing desire felt by the laity, as well as the clergy, to see our fine old churches restored. The Foreign Secretary presented a copy of a work by the Chev. Canina, on the structures of a part of Italy, from the Dowager Queen of Sardinia; and from Canina himself, a copy of his work on Rome, in the Christian times. M. Cæsar Daly forwarded a number of parts of the *Revue Generale de l'Architecture;* and Mr. Allason, his work on the Antiquities of Pola, Stanhope's Travels, and a paper from the *Quarterly*, establishing Mr. Allason's claim to the discovery of the *entasis* in Greek columns.

Mr. Brown exhibited a very curious marble panel found in Pompeii, which was beautifully sculptured on both sides. Some persons had thought that such decorative panels were hung up between columns, during the festivals of Bacchus, but Mr. Brown considered it had been used to fill a window opening; and that it had turned on a pivot, top and bottom. The heads carved upon it shewed very high art.

A cast of a bust in zinc, by a process recently discovered in Paris, was exhibited. The appearance of bronze was given to it, and it was stated to be very cheap.

Mr. J. G. Crace then read an account of the Palaces of Blois and Chambord, which will be found at length in our present number, and exhibited a variety of interesting illustrations of the Renaissance style of art from those buildings.

In the course of a long discussion which ensued at the close of the paper, Professor Donaldson observed that we had few works of the Renaissance in England to compare with those in France. There were two or three at Cambridge, of which the details were very good. At Blois, while the details were classic, the pervading sentiment was Gothic. To study works of this character, wherein there was much fancy and imagination, architects must go to France. The severe style of art was losing ground in England, and he thought it very probable that that of the Renaissance would be more practised here than it had been. He could not conclude without remarking how ably Mr. Crace, to whom they owed the paper of the evening, had carried out the views of Mr. Barry at the House of Lords.

Mr. I'Anson agreed in the opinion that we had no specimens of the Renaissance comparable with those of France. The screen in King's College Chapel, Cambridge, occurred to him as one of the few good examples. If we recalled the history of the countries, the reason of the difference was obvious. France, always fond of war, invaded Italy, and Francis I. brought thence Italian artists and a love of art. The Gothic of France of the period preceding the Renaissance, and practised contemporaneously with the style of the latter, was better than ours of the same period. For the great beauty of the ornaments and details in works of the Renaissance, France was indebted to the *cinque-centists* of Italy. The Renaissance was now and had been for some time the prevailing taste of Paris.

The Dean of Westminster remarked that there were some good decorations at Thornbury, which might stand fairly by the side of those at Blois. The desolation of Chambord had been mentioned: it was worth stating that one fragment of art there had been preserved. This was, the side-board of the founder. The last use made of it was for the embalming the body of Marshal Saxe! It was of stone, and had escaped destruction through its worthlessness. The Dean then made some observations, incidentally, on the use of the lias stone: several old towers near Bristol were constructed of it, and had lasted well. He thought it desirable the quarries should be again looked to. There were other stones, too, which might be made available, being more durable than the Bath oolite. Several of the Bath stone bridges on the Great Western Railway were already scaling and splitting.

The Chairman thought it most desirable that new materials, opened to us by the gigantic works of railroad companies, should be tested and made available.

AN ACCOUNT OF THE PALACE OF BLOIS AND PALACE OF CHAMBORD, FRANCE.

ESPECIALLY OF THE DECORATIONS.

Having been much interested during an excursion made to Touraine, in the autumn of last year, by visits to Blois, Chambord, Chenoueeaux, Amboise, and other monuments of the Renaissance style of architecture, which abound in that district of France, I am induced to lay before you a description of what I saw at the two former of those places, Blois and Chambord.

The town of Blois, on the river Loire, is of very considerable antiquity, and contains many objects highly interesting to the lover of mediæval art. It lies between two hills, on one of which is the cathedral, on the other the palace or castle.

The Castle of Blois is supposed to stand on the site of a Roman camp. Mention is made of it in history about the ninth century. I do not attempt to detail to you its various possessors, but merely observe, that in the year 1292 it first came to the De Chatillons, who are supposed to have built parts of the castle. Froissart, who was chaplain to Guy de Chatillon, Count de Blois, says, that it was "grand and strong, and one of the handsomest in France." By this Count Guy it was sold, as indignantly mentioned by Froissart, to Louis d'Orleans, brother to King Charles VI., who took possession in 1397. The Orleans retained the property till their descendant became King of France under the title of Louis XII.; it then remained crown property till Louis XIII. bestowed it on his brother, Gaston d'Orleans, at whose death it seems to have reverted to the crown, and at the Revolution to have become public property. Viewed as you ascend from the town, the castle appears rising from a mass of rock, on which is an imposing base of solid masonry, giving the idea of a fortress of considerable strength. Passing the west front of the building, you arrive at the Place des Jesuites, when the eye is struck with the magnificent north front of the quarter erected by Francis I. This front is entirely of stone; partly in two and partly in three stories. The windows are in arched recesses, relieved with deep colouring, producing a rich and powerful effect; between the windows are pilasters, and where these are double they are separated by niches and deep recesses. Picturesque bays also project in various parts of this façade. A large circular tower marks the old *tour des oubliettes*, or the *donjon*, considered one of the oldest parts of the building. The roof is separated from the entablature by a series of columns, thus forming an open gallery, and from the pedestals of these columns project tremendous gargels. To my mind the effect of this front is truly beautiful, and a successful example of the introduction of colour to architectural exterior. Part of the building was erected by the architect Mansard, by direction of Gaston d'Orleans, in the reign of Louis XIII., in a style of art seen to great disadvantage beside the beautiful front I have attempted to describe.

Leaving the *Place*, we approach the east front of the exterior, constructed by Louis XII. It is of brick, with ornamental stone dressings. I regret not being able to shew a view of this front, which is very picturesque, I sketched one window, and also—what is the principal object—the canopied recess that formerly contained the equestrian statue of King Louis XII. This recess, surmounted by its canopy, is of stone beautifully wrought. I have ventured to restore, in the drawing, the colouring to the back-ground, powdered with gold *fleurs-de-lis*, and to replace the statue as it existed previous to the Revolution, from a drawing in a manuscript by Felibien. On the fascia under the statue was formerly placed an inscription, in Latin, which may be thus translated:—

"Where by the grace of God Louis was born,
Here also, with a noble hand, he assumed the royal sceptre.
Happy the day which announced the coming of so great a monarch.
France could not have found a king more worthy of her."

That statue and the inscription are alike removed, and on the same fascia is now written "Caserne d'Infanterie." The palace of Louis XII. "the father of his people," is now a barrack.

Under this canopy is an archway, forming the principal entrance to the interior court of the palace. This court consists of an irregular square, the four sides of which are in as many styles of architecture. On the south, the Gothic of the fifteenth century; on the east, the elaborately ornamented Gothic of Louis XII.; on the north, the elegant *renaissance* of Francis I.; and on the west, the Franco-Italian style of Mansard: all these, full of irregularities, produce an *ensemble* picturesque and charming to the eyes of all, and most interesting to the lover of art.

The south side of the building, looking towards the interior court, was altered and partly rebuilt by the old Dukes of Orleans. It is of an unpretending style of domestic Gothic, the outer walls being of brick, the windows and dressings of stone. In this quarter, in addition to various apartments, is the old chapel of St. Calais, which dates from a much earlier period; a view of it can be seen in Androuet Ducerceau.

The east side of the court is the building erected by Louis XII.; it is of red brick, with window dressings, string courses, and enrichments of stone richly carved; above, rises a high roof formerly crested with gilt metalwork, from which project dormers in stone of beautiful tracery, the whole resting in front on a colonnade, forming a sort of cloister; the stone pillars being diapered with trellis work, in which were formerly *fleurs-de-lis* and ermines. This quarter contains the apartments occupied by King Louis XII., which, though now under one universal coat of whitewash and all in the occupation of soldiers, were formerly fitted up with regal splendour.

Here, in the year 1501, King Louis XII. received in this building the Archduke Philip of Austria, and a chronicler of the period gives a most complete and interesting description of the palace as it then appeared. The east front was then just finished, its network of stone shewn in all its brilliant freshness on its bright brick ground; the carvings were seen in all their perfection; a profusion of *fleurs-de-lis* and ermines, sculptured or painted, were spread over the building; gold, purple, and azure dazzled the eye in every direction, even up to the roof, whose crestings and enrichments were also gilt; over every door was seen the royal badge of the porcupine spreading out its quills, and over the entrance archway was the splendid statute of the king himself, young and handsome, noble and full of grace, as he then was.

Nor was the interior less magnificently decorated: rich tapestries, wrought in figures or flowers, or ornaments, furnished the walls; over the floors were spread thick carpets. The chimney-pieces were blazoned with heraldic shields, paintings, and devices; the joists of the ceilings (for they were unplastered then) glittered with gilding and elegant decoration; furniture, carved with the utmost delicacy of finish; beds, covered in the richest stuffs, embroidered in gold and in silks of all colours

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